

Regular Session, 2008

HOUSE BILL NO. 1091

BY REPRESENTATIVES PETERSON, DIXON, EDWARDS, HARDY, HOFFMANN,
AND PATRICIA SMITH AND SENATOR GRAY

STUDENT/SCH ATTENDANCE: Creates the Louisiana School Dropout Prevention Act of 2008 and provides for the circumstances under which certain students may withdraw from school

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:221(E) and to enact R.S. 17:221.4, relative to withdrawal
3 from school; to authorize certain students to withdraw from school under certain
4 circumstances; to provide for guidelines and procedures with respect to withdrawal
5 from school; to create a dropout prevention and recovery program; to provide for the
6 collection and reporting of related data; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. R.S. 17:221(E) is hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 17:221.4 is
9 hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 §221. School attendance; compulsory ages; duty of parents; excessive absences;
11 consent to withdraw

12 * * *

13 E. A child between the ages of seventeen and eighteen may withdraw from
14 school prior to graduation if all the following circumstances exist:

15 (1) with the written Written consent of is granted by his parent, tutor, or legal
16 guardian.

17 (2) An exit interview is conducted where the student and his parent, tutor,
18 or legal guardian provide written acknowledgment that withdrawal from school shall
19 likely reduce the student's future earning potential and increase the student's
20 likelihood of being unemployed in the future.

1 (e) Teacher advisories such as the use of graduation coaches and other
2 supports that are designed to specifically address the needs of youth most at risk of
3 dropping out of school.

4 (f) Strategies specifically designed to improve the high school graduation
5 rate of students at highest risk for dropping out, including youth in the foster care
6 system, pregnant and parenting youth, Limited English Proficient student, and
7 students with special education needs.

8 (g) Communicating with students and their parents or legal guardians about
9 the availability of local after school programs and the academic enrichment and other
10 activities the programs offer.

11 (h) Opportunities for credit recovery.

12 (3) The state board shall also gather the following data to ensure that all
13 programs are research-based and data-driven and use such data for continuous
14 program improvement:

15 (a) Total number of high school suspensions and expulsions.

16 (b) Total number of students enrolled in alternative schools.

17 (c) Total number of students who have failed Algebra I or English I.

18 (d) Total number of students who are repeating the ninth grade.

19 (e) Total number of students to repeat a ninth grade course.

20 (4) City, parish, and other local public school districts that fail to show a
21 decline in their annual dropout rates shall prepare and submit to the state board each
22 year a written report that documents:

23 (a) The outcomes of the dropout prevention strategies to date at the school
24 district level.

25 (b) How the school district dropout prevention strategies and activities will
26 be modified, based on the data.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

Peterson

HB No. 1091

Abstract: Provides circumstances under which a student who is 17 or 18 may withdraw from school and creates a dropout prevention and recovery program.

Present law authorizes a child who is 17 or 18 to withdraw from school prior to graduation with the written consent of his parent, tutor, or legal guardian, who shall be exempt from any related present law penalties.

Proposed law retains present law and provides for the following additional requirements that must be met before such a child may withdraw from school:

- (1) At the exit interview at which the student and his parent, tutor, or legal guardian provide written acknowledgment that withdrawal from school is likely to reduce the student's future earning potential and increase his likelihood of being unemployed in the future.
- (2) The chief administrator of the school must provide written consent.
- (3) The withdrawal is due to one or more of the following:
 - (a) The student is pregnant or actively parenting.
 - (b) The student is incarcerated or adjudicated.
 - (c) The student is institutionalized or living in a residential facility.
 - (d) The student has a chronic physical or mental illness.
 - (e) The student has family or economic hardships.

Proposed law creates a dropout prevention and recovery program known as the "La. School Dropout Prevention Act of 2008". Requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to work with public school districts with the lowest four-year cohort graduation rates in an effort to improve such rates. Requires BESE to incorporate dropout prevention strategies, target resources, and gather data that will improve graduation rates and educational outcomes in all grades in all schools.

Requires BESE to develop or identify intervention methods for districts with a four-year cohort graduation rate of less than 70% which may include the following:

- (1) Early intervention for students at risk of failing Algebra I or any ninth grade math class.
- (2) Alternative programs designed to reengage dropouts.
- (3) Increased availability of advanced placement courses.
- (4) Comprehensive coaching for middle school students below grade level in reading and math.

- (5) Teacher advisories such as the use of graduation coaches and other supports designed to address the needs of youth most at risk of dropping out.
- (6) Strategies to improve the graduation rate of students at highest risk for dropping out, including youth in the foster care system, pregnant and parenting youth, Limited English Proficient students, and students with special education needs.
- (7) Communicating with students and parents or legal guardians about the availability of local after school programs and the academic enrichment and other activities the programs offer.
- (8) Opportunities for credit recovery.

Requires BESE to gather the following data:

- (1) Total number of high school suspensions and expulsions.
- (2) Total number of students enrolled in alternative schools.
- (3) Total number of students who have failed Algebra I or English I.
- (4) Total number of students who are repeating the ninth grade.
- (5) Total number of students to repeat a ninth grade course.

Requires city, parish, and other local public school districts that fail to show a decline in their annual dropout rate to prepare and submit to BESE annually a written report that documents the outcomes of the dropout prevention strategies to date at the school district level and how such strategies and activities will be modified based on the data.

(Amends R.S. 17:221(E); Adds R.S. 17:221.4)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill.

- 1. Changes the circumstances due to which a student may withdraw from school from financial hardship requiring the student to support his family or a dependent; illness; or an order of a court that has jurisdiction over the student to the following: the student is pregnant or actively parenting; is incarcerated or adjudicated; is institutionalized or living in a residential facility; has a chronic physical or mental illness; or has family or economic hardships.
- 2. Changes the name by which the dropout prevention program shall be known from the "La. High School Dropout Prevention Act of 2008" to the "La. School Dropout Prevention Act of 2008".
- 3. Changes the type of program from a dropout prevention program to a dropout prevention and recovery program.
- 4. Provides that BESE's intervention methods shall be for districts with a four-year cohort graduation rate of less than 70% instead of those with a dropout rate of greater than 15%; changes other references of such rate from dropout rate to four-year cohort graduation rate.
- 5. Relative to BESE's intervention methods:

- (a) Provides for early intervention for students at risk of failing Algebra I or any ninth grade math class instead of students who fail Algebra I or any ninth grade math class and have insufficient credits to be promoted.
 - (b) Deletes offering full course fee waivers for students eligible for free and reduced lunches when enrolled in dual credit courses and deletes flexible programs for older students currently not enrolled as intervention methods.
 - (c) Adds the use of graduation coaches to supports designed to address needs of youth most at risk for dropping out.
6. Relative to data gathered by BESE:
- (a) Provides for total number of high school suspensions and expulsions instead of total number of such suspensions related to truancy.
 - (b) Provides for total number of students enrolled in alternative schools instead of alternative programs.
 - (c) Deletes total number of students reenrolled in programs with flexible schedules or community college programs.
 - (d) Provides for total number of students who have failed Algebra I or English I instead of Algebra I or ninth grade math.
 - (e) Provides for total number of students to repeat a ninth grade course instead of total number of students receiving remedial programming in ninth grade.
7. Limits school boards required to prepare and submit annually a written report to BESE relative to dropout prevention strategy outcomes to those that fail to show a decline in their annual dropout rates.